

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief Ronal W. Serpas



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Auto Theft is Dangerous

Chief Ronal Serpas announced today the results of a study that indicates that auto theft, which is classified as a "property crime," equates to danger to the public. WSP pursuit data collected through August 2003 revealed that Washington State Patrol troopers were involved in 236 pursuits. Of those 236 pursuits, 38 (or 16%) involved stolen vehicles. 45% of the 38 stolen vehicle pursuits resulted in collisions involving property damage or injury.

According to the most recent nationwide stolen vehicle statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Washington State auto theft rate is 3rd in the nation with 652 vehicles stolen per 100,000 inhabitants. This rate is 52% higher than the national average.

The National Insurance Crime Bureau reports that 30,182 vehicles have been stolen through September 2003 in Washington State, a 6.5% increase over 2002. At an estimated \$6,646 loss per stolen vehicle, auto theft has cost Washington State citizens \$20 million through September 2003.

"Auto theft is not only costly, but also increases the danger to the motoring public. We all need to make the reduction of this crime a priority," stated Washington State Patrol Chief Ronal W. Serpas.

The Washington State Patrol has three auto theft investigative teams dedicated to reducing auto theft in Washington State. These teams are assigned statewide and work in partnerships with city, county, and federal agencies. From January through September 2003, State Patrol auto theft teams have arrested 119 auto thieves and recovered 305 vehicles with a value of over \$3 million.

The State Patrol recommends the public utilize anti-theft measures to help law enforcement combat this crime. "There are several measures vehicle owners can take to decrease the likelihood of their vehicle being stolen, such as parking in secure, well lit areas with the keys removed and the doors locked," said Serpas.

Additional information on auto theft in Washington State is available on the Washington State Patrol Web site at <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/> or the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chief's Web site at <http://www.waspc.org/>.

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